



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release April 30, 1944.

An increase of nearly 400 percent in the population of game species of migratory waterfowl in North America during the past nine years was reported to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes today as the result of the Tenth Annual Inventory of Migratory Waterfowl conducted by the Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with many Federal and State agencies.

Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, director of the Service, reported that the present estimated population of 125,350,000 birds was probably the greatest since the early 1920's. At the low point of the so-called "duck depression" in 1934 and 1935 the migratory waterfowl population had fallen to approximately 27,000,000.

Dr. Gabrielson declared that the comeback of these birds was "one of the great achievements of the conservation forces of this country" and that it provided "full refutation of those who believe that conservation is a negative thing."

Among the ducks, he pointed out, the largest increases have been shown by the Mallard and the Pintail. The total population of the Mallard at the present time is between 35 and 40 millions and that of the Pintail is in excess of 20 millions.

Third place is held by the two Scaups, considered together, fourth by the Redhead, fifth by the Baldpate or Widgeon, and sixth by the Black Duck.

The Canvasback and Ruddy Duck also showed satisfactory increases, Dr. Gabrielson said, but decreases were recorded for a few species including the Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, and Shoveler. These species, with the exception of the Teals, do not rank high as desirable game and the declines noted are not large enough to be cause for any alarm.

The estimates for the goose population do not show any important changes, he said, but the Canada, White-fronted, and Blue Geese all showed some gains in numbers. Apparently there has been an unexplained reduction in the numbers of Snow Geese and of Ross's Goose and a lesser decline among Cackling Geese.

The Whistling Swan population appears to have suffered some losses. "The suggestion has been made," the report stated, "that we may have reached a saturation point for this species for the available habitat, particularly for winter quarters."

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

"A very heavy increase is again recorded for Coot, the indications being that we now have a continental population of these birds that is in excess of 20 millions," it was reported.

Pre-season estimates last year of a southward flight of birds that might total 150 million seem to have been substantially correct since the population loss during the shooting season (hunters' bag, plus lost birds, cripples, etc.) probably reached from 24 to 25 million. While the flight was heavy, in part of the country it was greatly delayed and there were a number of shifts of birds from their normal route South. This led to exceptionally good hunting in parts of the country, and poor hunting in others, Dr. Gabrielson said.

Along the Atlantic fly-way a considerable shortage was observed during the shooting season, due to a long delayed movement from the North-central portions of the continent, chiefly the prairie provinces of Canada. In the Mississippi fly-way, for the same reason, poor flights also were recorded in North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana, while the evidence indicated a heavier than normal migration in Iowa. Reports at Christmas time showed that even that late in the season a great number of birds were still in the North.

Nebraska also showed a heavy migration, Dr. Gabrielson said, and if it had not been for the poor showing in Oklahoma, where lack of water caused the birds to pass through rapidly, the situation in the Central fly-way would be considered entirely satisfactory.

The flight through practically all parts of the Pacific fly-way was good.

"We can take special satisfaction in the re-building of the migratory waterfowl population at this time," Dr. Gabrielson declared, "since we believe that there will be a large increase in the number of hunters after the war. Within a few years after the first World War, sales of hunting licenses went up nearly one-third. It is reasonable to expect that many thousands of young men in the Army who have been accustomed to the use of fire-arms for the first time, and who have gotten a taste of the outdoors, will want to hunt when they come back home."